



## *Commonwealth of Virginia*

### *Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services*

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Virginia Medicaid Agency Announces Supports for Health Care Providers**

*~State is seeking federal approval for retainer payments ~*

**Richmond** – The Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) today announced a series of strategies designed to support home and community-based health care providers as they serve Medicaid members during the COVID-19 health emergency.

The Virginia Medicaid agency is seeking federal approval to offer retainer payments for qualified adult day health centers and providers that offer day support-related services, such as group day, community engagement, and community coaching. The proposed payments would assist providers that are closed or unable to perform the level of services that is typically required due to social distancing orders and other restrictions in place to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus.

If approved, the retainer payments would be available for qualified providers through June 30, 2020. The agency is developing a process for implementation and guidelines on how payments would be disbursed.

“These providers are an essential part of our network of services for Medicaid members, and they are valued partners in our work to ensure that Virginians have meaningful choices for accessing care in their communities,” said Karen Kimsey, DMAS Director. “We offer this support to providers as they navigate this extraordinarily challenging time.”

Using authority provided by the General Assembly earlier this week to address the impact of COVID-19 on the Commonwealth, Governor Ralph Northam will be directing DMAS to make retainer payments to Medicaid providers, preserving access to these necessary community-based services.

DMAS obtained approval from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for additional flexibilities to address staffing needs and other supports for providers through Home and Community-Based Services waivers, including the Developmental Disability and Commonwealth Coordinated Care Plus waivers.

“These are important steps in addressing some of the most pressing issues identified by our providers, but we are not finished,” said Tammy Whitlock, DMAS Deputy Director of Complex Care and Services. “We are continuing to collaborate with providers to evaluate priority needs as we work together to ensure the health and well-being of Virginians.”

New initiatives approved for the state’s waiver programs include:

**Staffing Flexibilities**

- Spouses, parents of minor children, and legal guardians can provide and be reimbursed for personal care services.
- Personal care, respite and companion aides employed by an agency provider can perform services before they complete the required 40 hours of training. Agency providers are required to verify that aides are proficient in the skills needed to care for Medicaid members prior to delivering services in the home. Aides must complete 40 hours of training within 90 days after they begin performing services.

**Coverage Protections for Medicaid Members**

- Members will not lose waiver eligibility for the duration of the emergency regardless of the amount of waiver services received.
- Level of Care re-evaluations are extended from 12 months to 18 months.

**Social Distancing Compliance**

- Remote services and telehealth are permitted for routine visits, Level of Care screenings, re-assessments, service plan development meetings, registered nurse supervisory visits, and service facilitator reassessment visits.
- Electronic signatures are permitted for most required documents.
- Home and community-based providers are permitted to limit visitors to minimize the spread of infection from COVID-19.
- Sampling requirements for quality management reviews are reduced due to limited provider capacity to compile the necessary documentation.

DMAS is continuing to work with federal and state officials to develop and implement strategies to ensure that Medicaid members have access to critical health care services, including the detection and treatment of COVID-19, and to respond to the critical needs of health care providers.